

February 23, 2005

HR 810 -- Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005
CHI Position: SUPPORT

Since President Bush first announced his federal stem cell policy in August 2001, conditions regarding the viability of the 78 stem cell lines that were then sanctioned for research has become disappointingly clear. As it turns out, only 20 of those lines remained usable. Furthermore, this January scientists at the University of California San Diego and the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, California, released the findings of an extensive study, showing that even these 20 lines are contaminated by mouse feeder cells and not suitable for human therapies.

H.R. 810 would direct the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to develop standards concerning federally supported research on stem cells derived from embryos originally produced for fertility treatment purposes but in excess of clinical need. The measure further establishes ethical safeguards requiring written consent from, and prohibiting financial or other inducements to, the individuals who created the embryos.

In November 2004, California voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 71, a bond measure to direct \$3 billion toward stem cell research. Since then, other states have announced plans to take similar steps. However, while CHI enthusiastically endorsed passage of Prop. 71, we also noted that a patchwork of state-supported efforts and regulations could in no way supplant the resources and expertise that would result from NIH-approved research guidelines and funding.

While stem cell science is only a few years old, research results are offering promise to thousands of patients and their families that a cure or treatment for their disease may be on the horizon.

Therefore, CHI urges support for H.R. 810, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, to establish ethical guidelines that will allow scientists to fully pursue the promise of embryonic stem cell research.

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